Kennedy Charged in Auto Case

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EDGARTOWN, Mass. (AP) — Police filed a formal complaint charging Sen. Edward M. Kennedy with leaving the scene of an accident.

The complaint stems from weekend wreck on Chappaquiddick Island, adjacent to Martha's Vineyard on which this small resort town is located. A young woman was killed and Kennedy injured, though apparently not seriously.

The complaint was filed by Police Chief Dominic J. Arena with the District Court Clerk Thomas A. Teller.

ARENA SAID that an Edgartown lawyer, Richard J. McCarran, had informed the clerk he is representing Kennedy. McCarran asked for a hearing, which will be held in the Edgartown Courthouse.

A crowd of several hundred persons, mostly tourists, filled the street outside the red brick, century-old courthouse as Arena crossed the street from his headquarters in the Town Hall to visit the clerk.

AT A BRIEF news conference, Arena said that since the accident he had had a lot of telephone calls, mostly from the press, but "many others and telegrams all generally saying 'don't let the pressure get you.'

But I must say I have had no calls of any description from anybody trying to pressure me," Arena added.

Arena said yesterday he is "firmly convinced there was no negligence involved" in the accident.

"BUT THE matter of the time period after the accident . . . ," Arena said. "There is, in my opinion, a violation concerning going from the scene, leaving the scene."

The mishap occurred between 11 p.m. Friday and 1 a.m. Saturday as Kennedy

See KENNEDY— Page 4

Kennedy--

Continued from Page 1

was driving Mary Jo Kopechne, 28, of Washington, to a landing to catch the ferry back to the Vineyard.

The car skidded off a narrow bridge and landed bottom-up in eight feet of water. Kennedy escaped with what a physician said was a mild concussion.

Miss Kopechne, former secretary to the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., was trapped in the vehicle and drowned.

KENNEDY WENT to the police 10 hours after the accident. The car had been found by then; two boys going fishing saw its wheels beneath the water.

In a police statement, Kennedy said he was left dazed by the accident. He said he tried repeatedly to rescue Miss Kopechne, but was not able to find her.

The 37-year-old Massachusetts Democrat and Miss Kopechne had been at a dinner party at a private home on Chappaquiddick attended by several of Kennedy's friends and political associates. Kennedy said he returned to the home after the accident and climbed into the rear seat of a car parked outside.

"I THEN asked someone to bring me back to Edgartown," he continued. "I remember walking around for a period of time and then going back to my hotel room. When I fully realized what had happened this morning I immediately went to the police."

The time was 10 a.m. Saturday.

Arena said yesterday he already had sent Kennedy notice via registered mail that a complaint was being filed against him. He said that would be followed by formal notice of the complaint, after which Kennedy would have 24 hours in which to request a hearing. If no hearing was sought, Arena added, a formal summons would be issued automatically.

KENNEDY AND his wife Joan remained in seclusion yesterday at his home on Squaw Island, a short distance off Hyannis Port on Cape Cod where the Kennedy family compound is located. A contingent of police kept newsmen and sightseers at a distance.

In Washington, a spokesman for the senator said he would have no statement to make in connection with the accident for the time being.